ATARI PROGRAM EXCHANGE

Bruce E. Campbell

CHARACTER FUN

User-Written Software for ATARI Home Computers

CHARACTER FUN

by

Bruce E. Campbell

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Background Description

CHARACTER FUN is designed primarily to introduce the inexperienced computer user to the functions of the ATARI 400/800/1200 keyboards. In addition, many of the fascinating capabilities of the ATARI 400/800/1200 computers are utilized to allow you to experience the color, sound, graphics, and input/output options your computer system can utilize.

I wrote this program to stimulate my pre-school children's interest in computers and to introduce them to the functions of the keyboard. The entire ATARI character set, including the ATARI Control Graphics characters, can be displayed on the screen by pressing the appropriate keys. In addition, once I realized how fascinated they were, I added the music, colors, joystick effects, and the Custom Character Set to keep their interest and to challenge their creativity.

I have been very pleased with how fast my children have learned about the computer. They spend much more time with this program, creating their own designs, than they ever spent on the other keyboard type programs I showed them. I certainly hope you and your children and friends enjoy using this learning tool.

Minimum RAM and Accessories

Required Accessories
    48K RAM
    ATARI 810 Disk Drive

Optional Accessories
    Joystick Controllers

Contacting the Author

Users wishing to contact the author about CHARACTER FUN may write to 15434 S.W. 77th Court, Miami, Florida 33157.

Loading CHARACTER FUN

1. Remove any program cartridge from the cartridge slot of your computer console. If cartridge is present, a message will be printed to remove the cartridge and restart.

2. Plug in joysticks into the first two ports. (Optional)

3. Have your computer turned off.

4. Turn on empty disk drive. Wait for two busy light (and disk drive motor) to turn off.

5. Insert the CHARACTER FUN diskette into disk drive with the label on the top right. Then shut the disk drive door.

6. Turn on your computer and your TV set. The program will load into computer memory and start automatically.

The First Display Screen

The first display screen prints the program title, CHARACTER FUN, in large letters above a smiling face. To exit this demonstration mode, hold down the START key until the screen clears. Once the screen clears, a happy face cursor will appear on a blue screen. The program will now put characters on the screen at the cursor position as you press the keys.

Helpful Hints

Since I wrote this program to help my children learn about the keyboard, if you are using this program with young children, I suggest giving them no instructions. I found my children really enjoyed experimenting with all the options. Then when they asked how to repeat some instruction, I showed them how.

For older computer enthusiasts, let them choose between experimentation and reading the instructions.

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Keyboard Control Keys

CTRL arrow keys move the cursor to the next
desired position.
CTRL CLEAR clears the screen and moves the
cursor to the top left corner.
SHIFT CLEAR clears the screen and switches
between a color foreground and no foreground
color.
ESC switches between standard and Custom
Characters.
CTRL ESC switches on and off the instruction
text window at the bottom of the screen.
CTRL INSERT switches background and border color
between black and white.
BACK S deletes character immediately preceding
the current cursor position.
SHIFT DELETE clears the current cursor row.
RETURN positions the cursor at the beginning of
the next line.
SHIFT CTRL RETURN enters the screen save and
load process.
RETURN key turns on/off background music.
TAB key turns on/off background music.
SHIFT CTRL TAB removes cursor from and returns
cursor to screen.
BREAK has been disabled.
SYSTEM RESET stops program and reloads the
program from the diskette.
ATARI LOGO, CAPS, and SHIFT keys have their
normal function.

Console Keys

START exits the demonstration mode. It also
rotates the screen background colors.
SELECT switches between typing characters
forward or backward.
OPTION switches between typing characters upside
down or right side up.
OPTION SELECT scrolls the screen to the right.
OPTION START scrolls the screen up.
SELECT START switches between a single color and
multicolor foreground.
OPTION SELECT START switches between large
characters (5 or 6 rows of 10) and small
characters (10 or 12 rows of 20). This option
clears the screen and resets all the options to
the normal start position. Background music is
turned on.

Joystick Controls

JOYSTICK #1: The joystick plugged into the first joystick port controls screen scrolling. Pushing the joystick in any of the eight directions scrolls the whole screen in that direction until the joystick is released. When the FIRE button is pressed, an explosion sound occurs and the screen image shakes.

JOYSTICK #2: The joystick plugged into the second joystick port controls the happy face cursor position. Pushing the joystick in any of the eight directions moves the cursor in the desired direction until the joystick is released. When the FIRE button is pressed, a phaser type sound is heard and a phaser 'star' is typed at the cursor position. A phaser shot is not allowed in the same position twice in succession.

Start Position

+ Large characters (5 rows of 10).
+ Instruction text window at bottom of screen.
+ Cursor at upper left corner, screen clear.
+ Solid blue foreground.
+ White background.
+ Standard character set.
+ Capital letters.
+ Characters right side up and forward.
+ Background music on cursor position.
+ Characters right side up and forward (POP! Goes the Weasel).

Custom Character Set

(See attached quick reference sheets.)

+ Small letters (caps lock) - single character
Crazy Characters: spaceships, faces, bugs,
animals, flowers, stick figures.

+ Capital Letters
    Normal keys: Bottom three rows of keys
    form several different large faces (see
    Making Faces on quick reference sheets).

        3rd row from bottom: Hats and Eyebrows
        2nd row from bottom: Ears and Eyes
        Bottom row keys: Mouths and Ties

+ Top Row Keys (normal and shift) - provide
additional graphics characters. (see Custom
Graphics Characters on quick reference sheets.)

+ CTRL Key (See Trains, Trucks, and Cars and
House and Building on quick reference sheets.)

        3rd row from bottom plus 'L' and
        semi-colon: form train cars.
        2nd row from bottom (G,H,I,J only) form
        cars and trucks.
        Remaining 2nd row and bottom row keys:
        Building blocks, windows, doors, roofs,
        etc.

Other Notes

+ In the Standard Character Set, when the
letters A-G and a-g are typed, the corresponding
C-major musical notes are sounded.

+ The demonstration mode continues as long as
START is not pressed.

+ After the program is started, if no action is
detected (keys pressed or joysticks used) in 4
minutes, the program returns to the
demonstration mode.

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Save/Load Screen Option

Note: Since your CHARACTER FUN progam diskette is unpoched, you will need to provide another formatted diskette to store your screen data.

+ Enter this option by holding down the SHIFT and CTRL keys and pressing the RETURN key.

+ Choose from the four options (printed below the Saved Screen Directory):
   1) SAVE 2) LOAD 3) DELETE 4) EXIT

+ SAVE Option! Requires 4 sectors for large characters, 16 sectors for small characters. (Refer to FREE SECTORS listed below SAVE SCREEN DIRECTORY). Follow the instructions to save your screen. If the new file name matches an existing file name, the new one will replace the existing one if you so dirsct. The SAVE Option returns to the screen display you saved.

+ LOAD Option! Enter the number of the file you want. (Refer to the SAVE SCREEN DIRECTORY). The LOAD Option returns to the requested screen display.

+ DELETE Option! Enter the number of the file to delete from your diskette. (Refer to the SAVE SCREEN DIRECTORY). You will be asked to confirm your DELETE choice before any action is taken. The DELETE Option returns to the SAVE/LOAD Option Menu.

+ EXIT Option! Returns to the screen display.

+ Notes! Most of the screen display options will return to their START POSITION. The following options will return to the mode in which the screen was left (when SAVE, DELETE, or EXIT Options used) or the mode in which the screen was saved (or the LOAD Option):
   - Large/small character mode.
   - Color or no foreground.
   - Instruction text window
   - Single or multicolor foreground.
   - Standard or Custom Character Set.
   - Black or White background and border.
In addition the background music status (on or off) will be maintained.

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Included with the **CHARACTER FUN** diskette
are five sample screens. These samples can be
loaded using the **Save/Load Screen Option**
described on page 6. They are named **PICTURE.1 —
PICTURE.5** and will be listed under the Save
Screen Directory. These five files are locked
using the Disk Operating System and cannot be
DELETED or written over by the **CHARACTER FUN**
program.

RESOURCE CREDITS

CHARACTER FUN was written by Bruce E. Campbell
using an ATARI BASIC, an ATARI 800 Computer, and an
ATARI 810 Disk Drive. The **CHARACTER FUN** program
and program documentation Copyright is
registered with the Library of Congress under
the name of this author.

ATARI BASIC, the ATARI 400/800/1200 Home
Computers, and the ATARI 810 Disk Drive are
products of ATARI, Inc.

The distribution version of **CHARACTER FUN** was
produced using copyrighted software products of
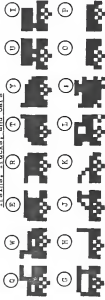Monarch Data Systems, Cochituate, MA 01778.

MAKING FACES

NOTES

- Hit "ESC" for Custom Characters.

- Use the CTRL arrow keys to position blinking face (cursor).

- To get Making Faces parts, press the letter shown at left above the part you desire.

- [ ] SHIFT key must be pressed, then held down for these characters.

CUSTOM CHARACTER SET

Trains, Trucks, and Cars

NOTES

- Hit "ESC" for Custom Characters.
- Press the letter shown above the desired character.
- To get small letter characters, press (and don't release) the "CAPS LOCK" key.
- ⊙ CTRL key must be pressed and held down for these characters.

Houses and Buildings

Crazy Characters

Atari Control Graphics

Custom Graphics Characters

NOTES

- To set the ATARI Control Graphics, use the normal alphabetic mode.

- Hit "ESC" for Custom Graphics Characters.

- Press the letter shown above the desired character.

- CTRL key must be pressed and held down for these characters.

- SHIFT key must be pressed and held down for these characters.